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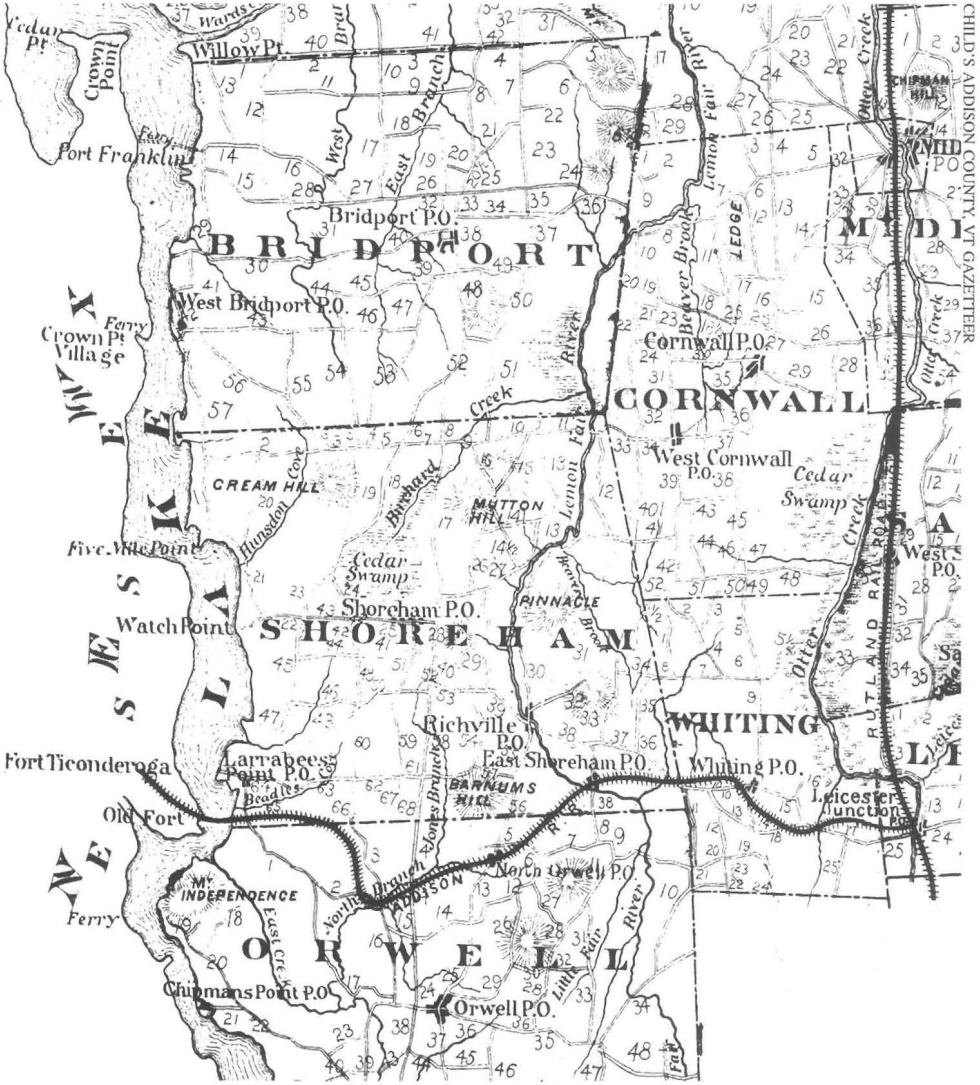
The Addison Railroad



A map of the Addison Railroad and its connection with other rail lines in the area.

About the Author

Robert S. Congdon Jr. is in his senior year as a secondary education social studies major at the College of St. Joseph in Rutland. He was born locally and resides on the family dairy farm in Clarendon, Vt. He has been a student member of the historical society for the last several years. During that time he has completed many projects for his coursework utilizing the society's materials. The following story was his culminating seminar paper for his bachelor's degree. Recently, Robert completed an internship at the Vermont Marble Museum. There, he conducted some research on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which will be incorporated into an exhibit opening Memorial Day weekend at the Marble Exhibit.

Introduction

The concept of building a railroad in Addison County was adopted by the administration of the Rutland Railroad. It wanted to develop a way for their railroad to obtain business that was moving in from the Great Lakes and Canada, business that was going to their rival the Vermont Central Railroad.[1] The problem encountered by the Rutland Railroad connection to New York railroad lines was that a steamboat was necessary to cross Lake Champlain and it was not reliable in the winter. There was a need for a reliable crossing of Lake Champlain that would avoid the Vermont Central Railroad and give the Rutland Railroad the business. The idea developed that an all rail route would be the best option. Thus, the Addison Railroad began.[2]

The Addison Railroad was chartered in 1870 and was completed by the end of 1871. Little did the owners know that the tiny branch would soon be the center of a railroad power struggle. Connections to New York were not the only area that needed the rails. Whiting town historian Harold Webster who lived through most of the Addison Railroad's life remembered, "The big problem in the early days was transportation. Addison County, with its large fertile fields, had some of the best farmland in the country. They could produce anything but had no way to move it to market."[3] The railroad was the county's answer to its economic growth and production problems; it provided the outlet for goods. The Addison Railroad, also known as the Addison Branch Railroad, developed from the need for efficient transportation; yet changing technology, which advanced new modes of shipping and passenger transport, ultimately led to its demise.

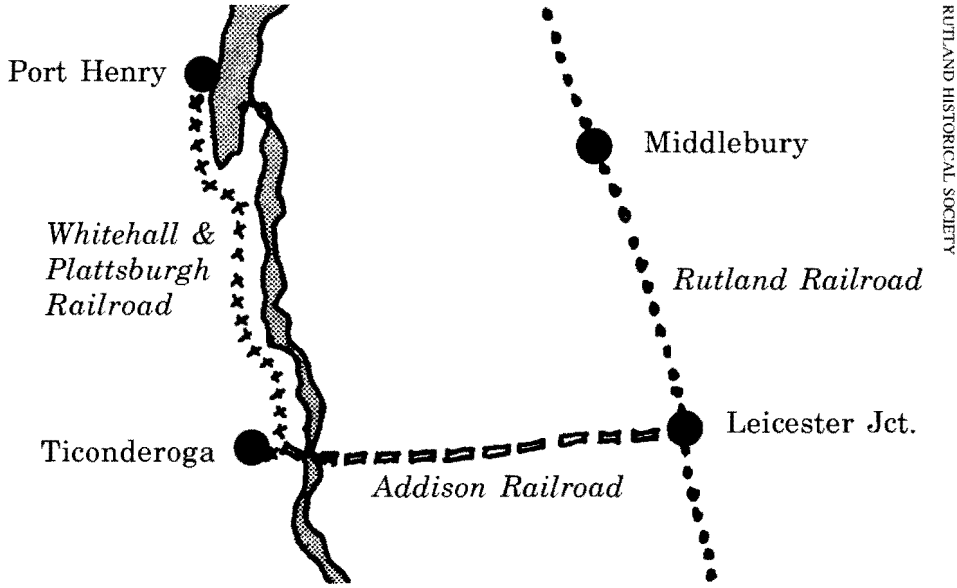
The Addison Railroad

By Robert S. Congdon, Jr.

The years during and following the Civil War were some of the best for railroad development in the nation. The Civil War created the need to transport goods for the war effort and troops from place to place efficiently. Following the war, the development of rail lines for efficient transport continued. "Railroads permeated every last corner of American geography and mind. The trunk lines stretched out to reach Chicago, to reach the Gulf, to reach the West Coast. Branch lines came to the main lines in patterns like the ribs to a fish's backbone."[4] For Addison County, specifically, there was a need to transport agricultural products to market and to get supplies back in order to aid the growing farms. The water routes across Lake Champlain were not fast enough to keep up with the needs of the area.[5]

Meanwhile the Rutland Railroad had long sought a route to connect themselves to Canadian and Great Lakes traffic. The Rutland Railroad had been involved in the Ogdensburg Railroad, located in northern New York, and had a productive business with the steam ship they were operating across Lake Champlain. Governor Page, the president of the Rutland Railroad, was interested in securing business in the much more profitable Canadian and Great Lakes traffic. He also searched for a place to build an all rail route over Lake Champlain because he wanted to take away as much business as possible from his competitor, the Vermont Central Railroad.[6] The Vermont Central operated all the rails north from Burlington. The Rutland Railroad wanted to complete its connection from its ferry boat south and have its own lines connected north with the Rouses Point crossing on the lake. It was unable to do so because of the Vermont Central.[7] The ferry had to transport rail cars on Lake Champlain in order to reach Rutland lines, an action that would not work in the winter. In the summer it was not able to keep up with the traffic.[8] Thus, the Rutland Railroad Company, under Governor Page, began exploring the alternate possibility of an all rail route that would allow them to take business away from the Vermont Central but also allow them to bypass the Central in wintertime. The Rutland Railroad not only gained influence in the Ogdensburg Railroad but also within the Whitehall and Plattsburgh Railroad. Their influence increased because Rutland stockholders invested heavily in the Whitehall and Plattsburgh when the company began having financial difficulties. The Rutland

stockholders knew the importance of the line to their interests in connecting their railroad with the freight coming from Canada and the Great Lakes into Mooers Junction on the Ogdensburg Railroad. The Rutland Railroad stockholders knew that if they were to acquire the freight on a line that crossed the southern part of the lake they would absolutely need the Whitehall and Plattsburgh to be financially sound and complete.[9]



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The Whitehall and Plattsburgh Railroad would allow the Rutland Railroad access to the iron business at Port Henry, New York, by way of the Addison Railroad.

The actions of the Rutland Railroad to take business away from the Vermont Central led to an interesting development. In 1870, fearful that the Rutland Railroad would effectively bankrupt the Vermont Central, the Vermont Central proposed to lease the Rutland Railroad. The Vermont Central leased the Rutland Railroad and all of its subsidiaries for $376,000 a year.[10] However, by 1875, the Vermont Central defaulted on its rent and, in order to maintain its lease of the Rutland, had to abandon the still incomplete Whitehall and Plattsburgh Railroad to the Delaware Hudson Railroad Company that affected the Addison Railroad that had been in existence for a few years.[11]

The Addison Railroad initially was chartered in 1867 by a group of local businessmen who were interested in getting a railroad built from the Rutland line to Lake Champlain.[12] From statements of the time it does not appear that in its preliminary stages the company was

interested in crossing the lake. Nevertheless, the Addison Railroad Company, under the auspices of local interests, began to secure a right of way for the railroad. However, due to financial difficulties, construction was not able to begin.[13]

It is unclear when Governor Page of the Rutland Railroad became interested in the plans that the Addison Railroad Company had, but records show that in March 1869, Governor Page was elected President of the company by the stockholders and re-elected in 1870.[14] His interest in the company is understandable because it provided the Rutland Railroad the link that it had wanted. The railroad provided a route that had very few sharp grades and a good shallow southerly crossing of Lake Champlain. The crossing of the lake at Larabee's Point would provide a good connection to Ticonderoga, New York, which had another perk for the Rutland Railroad that Page knew about. Ticonderoga was connected to Port Henry, New York, to the north. Port Henry contained iron ore that was being mined. The ore was a very crucial commodity that needed railroads to transport it. It has been said that the iron ore from Port Henry was of some of the highest quality in the world.[15] In fact, the ore from those mines had been used to build the "Monitor", the famous Civil War ironclad. Page certainly sought to have his railroad involved in some of the iron business at Port Henry.[16]

The Addison Railroad was officially chartered in 1870. By that time the right of way had been obtained and the line of the route had been decided. The route would begin at Whiting Station (later renamed Leicester Junction) and end at Ticonderoga, New York (later named Addison Junction).[17] Ground was broken on November 5th of 1870 and a contract was awarded to W. Phelps and Son for approximately $500,000 including the bridge across the lake.[18] It was decided that it would be desirable for the railroad to be completed in one year. To aid in the process, the Rutland Railroad officially leased the under construction Addison Railroad for $15,000 a year on December 7, 1870. It was a 99-year lease.[19] With the lease of the Addison route and a complete Whitehall and Plattsburg Railroad certain in the near future, the Rutland would have an efficient route to circumvent the Vermont Central year round. So in just a few weeks, following the Addison lease, the Vermont Central Railroad leased the Rutland Railroad. Construction on the Addison Railroad continued until its completion in 1871. The great rivalry that had been the center of controversy no longer existed.[20] The Addison Railroad "would never carry the traffic that so threatened the [Vermont)] Central [Railroad] that it was forced to gain control of the [Rutland] line at such an exorbitant price."[21] The Central Vermont's lack of interest in the Whitehall Plattsburg

Railroad led to its sale to the Delaware Hudson in 1875. As a result, the Addison would never be developed into the potentially great line that it could have been if it remained solely under the Rutland Railroad dominion.

Though the rivalry no longer existed, it is important to note that the Addison Railroad still was going to serve as an important route to that area. There were still important goods to be shipped across the lines. Construction had begun and continued at a steady pace in 1871 even though various factions were trying to put an end to the plans of crossing the lake. There were meetings held in Whitehall that sought to force work stoppage on the bridge and there was also pressure from steamboat companies on Lake Champlain that believed their business would be affected by the bridge.[22] That spring there was also a large crew of men working in the woodlots removing timber for ties, lumber and shingles. Not only were ties needed for the railroad itself but lumber was needed for the stations that were to be constructed and the one covered bridge which was needed to cross the Lemon Fair River.[23] Work continued and progress was made when

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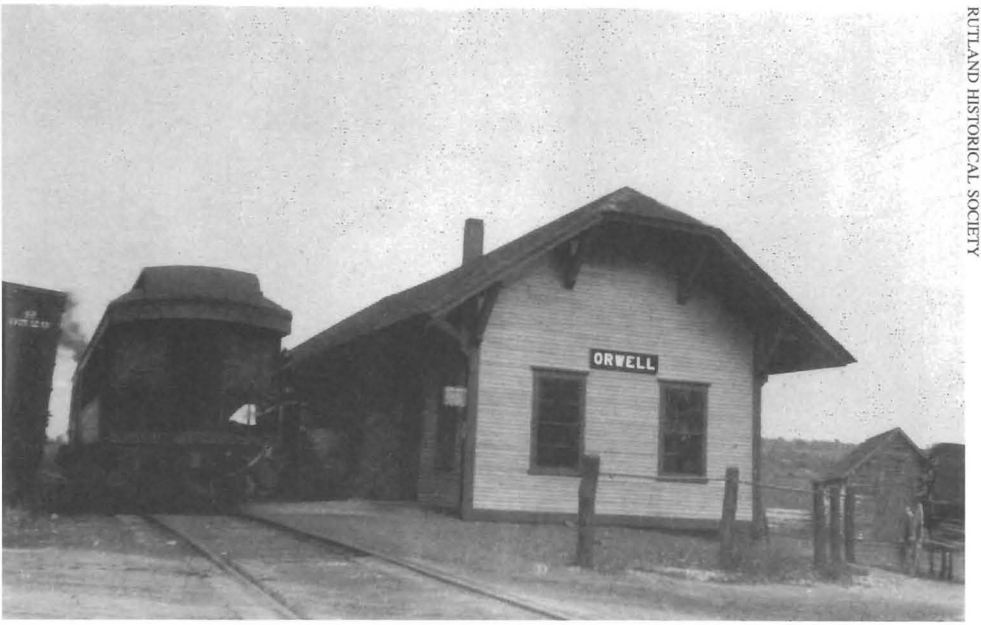
The covered bridge at Shoreham

the *Rutland Herald* reported in September of 1871, "The road is graded the entire length about 14 miles to be laid this week."[24] Stations were built along the route simultaneously as the rails were being laid down. The Orwell Station was reportedly built in 1871 for between $1200-$1500.[25]



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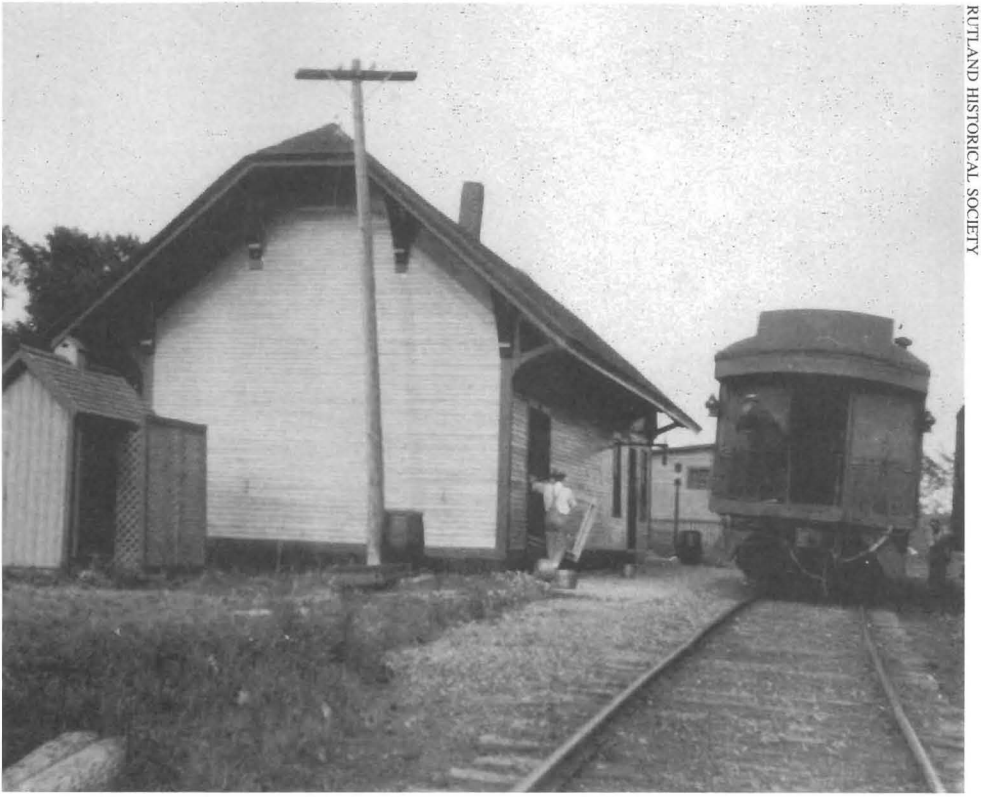
The station at Orwell, Vermont.



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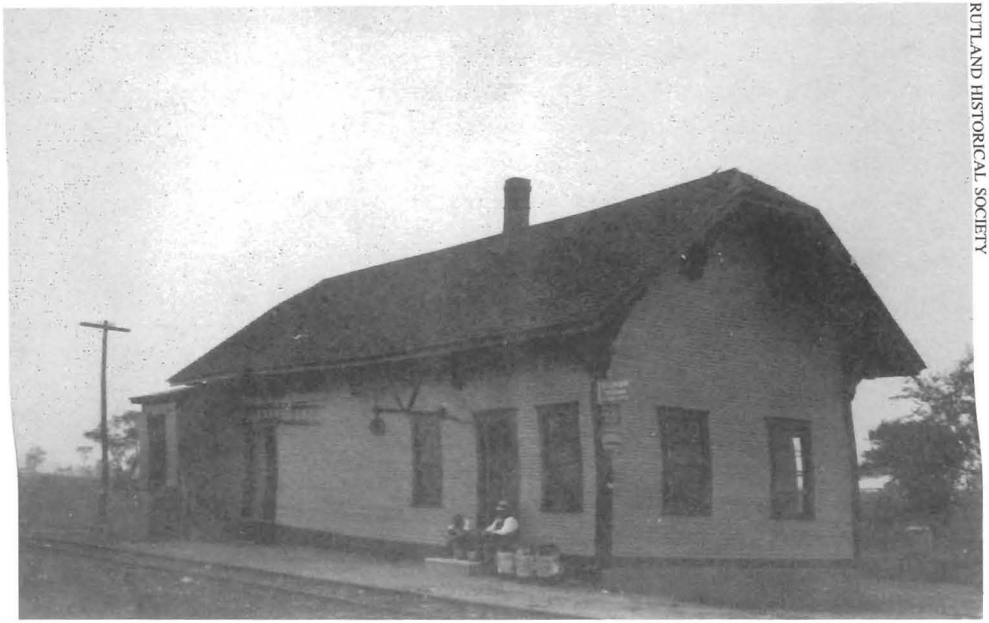
The station at Shoreham, Vermont.



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The station at Whiting, Vermont.

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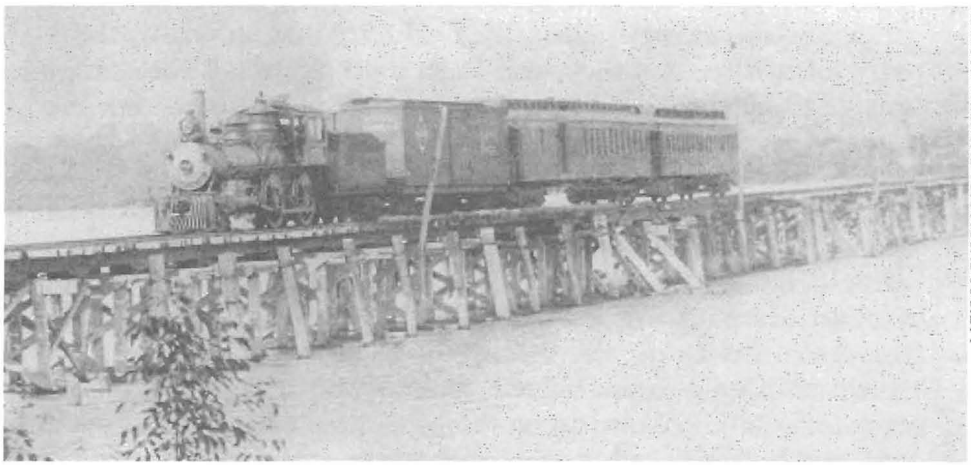
The station at Leicester Junction, Vermont.

The stations at Orwell, Whiting, Shoreham and Leicester Junction and a station at Larabee's Point were the main stops on the line in Vermont.[26]

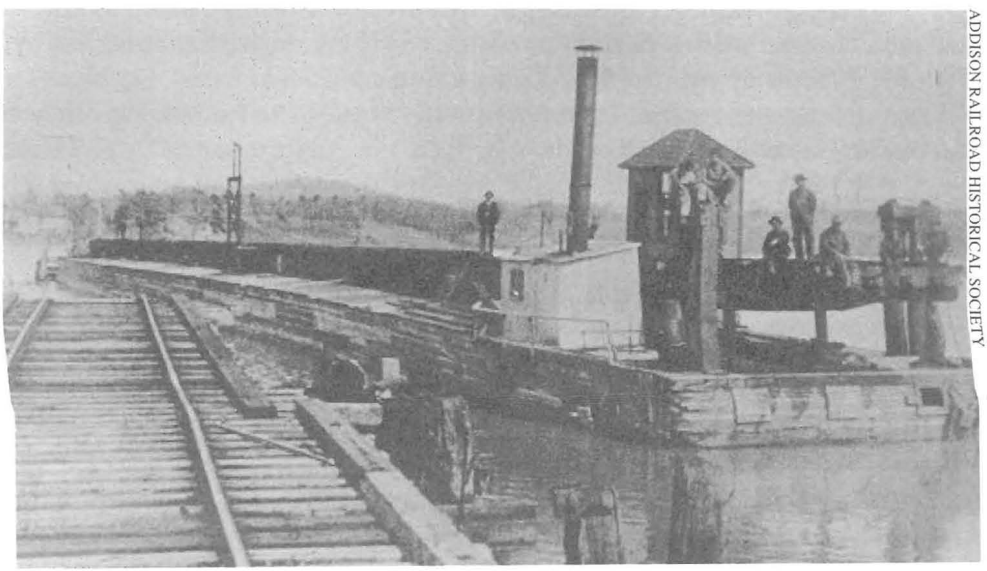
The bridge at Lake Champlain was the final section of the Addison Railroad. Having resolved the problems of those who wanted to stop

its construction, the bridge parts were completed and prepared for assembly in September of 1871. The bridge was considered a technological masterpiece for the time period in which it was built. The bridge was 1,830 feet long and designed to allow boat traffic to continue operation on the lake. In order to be efficient, the bridge needed to be opened and closed quickly in order to accommodate both boat and rail traffic. The bridge was built as a solid trestle on driven timbers except for a 300-foot section in the center that was a floating pontoon-like raft. The floating section was secured to one of the fixed trestles and was operated much like a door on a hinge.



ADDISON RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Train on Addison Railroad trestle across Lake Champlain.



ADDISON RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Drawbridge of the Addison Railroad at Lake Champlain.

It was in September 1871 that the pontoon draw boat was completed and was prepared to launch following a previous minor accident from which it needed to be repaired.[27] On September 26th the businessmen of the railroad met for the second attempt at a launch, when a rainstorm forced them indoors. The *Burlington Free Press* later reported the following:

> The railroad officials were there and had taken a brief shelter from the rain in the United States Hotel near by, waiting for the hour fixed; and while they were speculating on the probability of better success this time, and possibly 'toasting' to that effect, the balky structure, whose bearings were probably lubricated by the falling rain, started on its own hook without waiting for the word to 'go', breaking the fastenings designed to prevent its rapid decline, nor waiting for the imperial judges to witness it. It plunged into the lake thus, again willfully disappointing those who had intended to see the show. One of the workmen was standing about midway of the bridge, on the water side, when it started its downward career, thus placing him in great peril; he at first tried to run around the one end, but finding his time too short and his territorial limits rapidly lessening, he plunged into the lake, and dexterously dove to the bottom, when the bridge passed over him, and he came up on the other side of it, a wiser yet a thoroughly frightened man. It was afterwards ascertained that the depth of the water where the man was lying was less than four feet, while the draught of the float is two feet when lying still, and the man's escape from being crushed beneath the ponderous structure was almost miraculous.[28]

The prominent railroad members had missed the launching of their pride on the short line, the drawbridge. On September 30th, 1871 the last rail of the Addison Railroad was laid in the presence of then ex-Governor Page who had originally sought to have the line built and knew of its potential. In November of 1871, the contractors officially turned over the railroad to the Rutland Railroad as ready for business.[29]

On December 1st, 1871 the Railroad was opened to the public. An excursion train also made its way over the rails on December 6th to Fort Ticonderoga. The excursion trains continued into the 1900s. Harold Webster of Whiting remembered going over the line on an excursion train to the fort when President Teddy Roosevelt was there.[30] It was also noted that in December of 1871, the stagecoach that ran between Shoreham and Whiting was discontinued.[31] Many

historians have overlooked the significance of the discontinuation of the stagecoach. The Addison Railroad would eventually be discontinued by new and emerging technologies of the twentieth century, much like the stagecoach was discontinued because of the new and emerging technology of the nineteenth century.

In the first few years of operation the Addison Railroad not only operated on the Vermont side but also ran north to Port Henry on the lines of the southern portion of the incomplete Whitehall and Plattsburg Railroad. There were two trains daily that ran from Leicester Junction on the Vermont side to Port Henry, New York. The trains were not solely for freight; one train a day was passenger service.[32] The Addison Railroad now offered a new connection to the outside world for the rural farm towns of Leicester, Whiting, Orwell, and Shoreham. Not only could they travel across the lake to New York, but they could also travel in the opposite direction to a place like Brandon, by picking up a train at Leicester Junction, for a shopping excursion or even a visit to the dentist.[33] In fact, high school aged students from the rural areas would ride the train to school in Brandon.[34] It was even reported that residents of Brandon would venture out to the country on the line to pick berries for a day. Conductors would often make special stops or send out an extra whistle to warn the pickers they needed to get on if they wanted a ride back.[35] Not only were the local residents of the towns relying on the railroad for their transport to and from various locations but there were also summer boarders and traveling men who came through the towns as well.[36]

The landscape marked the progress of the railroad as forests were cut and the wood used for the old wood burning locomotives that were used on the lines.[37] Wood burning locomotives were hard on the landscape and the engineers as they handled large chunks of wood.[38] The Addison Railroad would eventually end up with coal burning engines which were easier for the engineers to operate; but because the Addison was a short line, it generally possessed second rate and worn out equipment.

Not only were the trains successful in their use as passenger service but the shipping of freight was a major part of the line as well. The early volume of freight would not equal the transport of the late 1890s or early 1900s but it is important to note that there were growing shipments of freight that began to rely on the line for transport. Because of the efficient transportation outlet, during this period agricultural areas were able to expand and more easily send their produce and surplus to market.

During the early years of the railroad the major products shipped were agricultural. There were livestock yards and scales at the Orwell station and many cattle cars were sent to market via the railroads as well as pigs sent to Boston.[39] The hay grown in Addison County for many years traveled the rails to Boston as it was needed for people with horses, especially the wealthier in the city.[40] When rail service was going to Port Henry there was also a large amount of pig iron (iron ore) that was shipped over the rails through Rutland and to the south.[41] These products moved over the lines because the Addison Railroad was the most efficient and effective way to transport these goods. The route across the lake and onto the Rutland lines was shorter in mileage, especially shipping to Boston, and the route was smoother with fewer hills allowing easier shipping. The Addison Railroad had a good start with passenger travel and commercial shipping but then a period of trouble began.

When the Vermont Central leased the Rutland Railroad and its subsidiaries in 1871, the Addison Branch was under contract to be built and the Vermont Central allowed the construction to take place. Following, the construction, the Vermont Central did little to maintain the railroad and by the end of the 1870s it was in very bad shape. The Vermont Central was leasing the Rutland Railroad so that it would not secure the bypass line on the west side of Lake Champlain, however, everyone knew the line would eventually be built, if not by Rutland by someone. When the Vermont Central gave up the Whitehall and Plattsburg line, the Delaware and Hudson Railroad saw its opportunity. They immediately drew up the plans to complete the through line from Plattsburg to Whitehall.[42] By 1875, the through route was completed and the line on the west side of the lake finally existed. Harold Webster speaks of the excitement of the local people who thought that this would mean the Addison would be utilized to its potential now, but that was all for naught. The Central Vermont was forcing all traffic across its northerly crossing of the lake and down its own line and it continued to let the Addison Rails deteriorate.[43]

Another problem arose in 1874. In April of that year, ice on Lake Champlain broke up and damaged the trestle that allowed the trains to reach Port Henry. This was a different trestle than the one at Larabee's point. The trestle had been built across Bulwagga Bay at a point north of Larabee's on the New York side. As the ice broke up it was pushed by a northerly wind and did very serious damage to the trestle that crossed the lake. The railroad was forced to abandon the trestle until another line could be built around the bay. From that point on, the Addison rail line would only travel across the lake to

Ticonderoga (Addison Junction) and then return to Leicester Junction rather than traveling north on New York lines to Crown Point or Port Henry.[44]

The Addison Railroad had been neglected. Many of the accidents that took place on the line took place during this period. There were many reports of trains going over the drawbridge and having a car or two go into the lake or onto the ice.

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Accidents like this undated one were not infrequent.

There are conflicting reports as to engines actually going into the lake. One accident killed the engineer, fireman, and bridge tender while going around a curve and as the train rolled down a hill. The railroad was described as a death trap during this time period. The rails were in bad shape and needed replacing; and the ties were bad as well.[45] The drawbridge was replaced in 1888 making the trestle across the lake the best part of the route solving many of the issues that it had in years prior.[46] In 1889, the railroad was inspected by the State Railroad Commissioners because of a complaint that was filed by H.S. Brookins who was a prominent businessman from Shoreham. Their report details the problems with the railroad.

"The track, which is now all of fifty-six pound iron except for four miles, which is second hand steel, is in a bad general condition throughout its entire length; the joints are battered and open and the cars run roughly... approaches continue faulty and dangerous. The roadbed is among the most neglected in the State too narrow for proper support of ends of ties, particularly on curves and over fills, and the

ties are largely unfit for safe travel or traffic over them...[trains are], limited in speed to less than fifteen miles per hour."[47]

The report of the railroad commissioners supports Harold Webster's statement that trains had to slow to less than 15 miles per hour especially when traveling around curves to prevent them from tipping. Sometimes the trains were going too fast and rolled off the tracks. One went down an embankment at Larabee's Point.[48] The route also had a persistent problem in the springtime. Where the track neared a place called Pleasant Brook, depending on the snowmelt, it was common for the water to go over the tracks. On some occasions the water was shallow enough for the train to travel through. At other times it was high enough to put the fire out in the locomotive and stop the train dead in its tracks. In fact, during the first year of operation in April of 1872 there were three days that the train could not make it through.[49] This problem would persist into the 1900s as well. The *Orwell Citizen* reported in April of 1913 that "owing to the high water between Whiting and Leicester Junction, no trains have gone through since Thursday of last week. Passengers have been transferred by boat, but no mail has got through."[50] On some occasions the water posed quite a problem. In 1913, the trains did not go through for nine days as the *Orwell Citizen* reported. "The trains began running through Leicester after the recent floods for the first time April 2nd. A large quantity of mail had accumulated at Leicester during the high water."[51]

From 1887 to 1891 the railroad bed was repaired and new rails were laid, leading to general improvement of the line. The Addison was a viable railroad again. The speed limit on the rails again rose to 20 mph and the bed was in good condition.[52] This era could be considered the golden age of the Addison Railroad. There were a few small accidents and an accidental fire that destroyed the drawbridge in 1902. The railroad was viable and the drawbridge was quickly rebuilt following the fire.[53]

During the late 1890s and early 1900s, the Addison's business began to improve for a short period of time. There were several factors that enabled this to happen. First, the Vermont Central went into bankruptcy in 1896 and was forced to return the railroads it controlled back to their original owners. And as Harold Webster states "Now the Rutland Railroad would have to go to work."[54] The conditions were not the same as before when the Rutland Railroad had the opportunity to control the business on the west side of the lake. The Delaware Hudson now operated the Whitehall and Plattsburg and the original owner also operated the Ogdensburg Railroad. The empire

that could have been was no longer within grasp but the Rutland did still have the Addison that was in relatively good shape. Shippers had become wiser as well and realized that the Addison was a better route. The State Railroad Commission reported in 1898 that, "The roadbed on this branch has undergone marked improvement, so that it is now in very fair condition."[55] It was during this period that Harold Webster remembered seeing double headers [two train engines] towing long trains over the lines.[56]

During this era the freight from the Great Lakes that Governor Page dreamt would roll over the lines began to do so. A variety of freight was shipped over the lines from the Great Lakes and Chicago region but it was inevitable that a large portion of that freight was grain. In the early days of railroad and until 1915, the railroads were allowed to own boat steamships and rail lines in order to build their business. In 1915 the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) ruled that train companies could not own boats and operate them in order to build empires. The United States Congress had passed this act, known as the Panama Canal Act. The ICC ruled that the Rutland had to follow the rule as well.[57] This act, passed in 1915, did not have direct effect on the Addison Railroad freight traffic as it was going another route by 1915. It did have a great effect on the Rutland Railroad. By 1915, the Rutland Railroad Company had built a large empire of not only railroads but also of steamers on the Great Lakes coming in from Chicago. The Rutland had actually bought elevators for grain in Chicago and also had one in Ogdensburg for the grain to be loaded on trains there. The effect of the ICC ruling damaged the Rutland severely. The Rutland had well utilized the elevators and ships prior to the ruling, and while the freight was going over the Addison's rails from the Great Lakes, it is without doubt that some of that freight was grain that had been shipped to Ogdensburg.[58]

During the glory days of the Addison, local freight was also being shipped at a high rate. As in the early days of the railroad, hay continued to be shipped by rail to Boston as a valuable commodity. The commodities of cheese and butter were shipped as well.[59] The shipments of cheese and butter are understandable as Orwell contained both a cheese factory and creamery. Little information on the cheese factory is available other than it existed in 1870. The creamery was reported to have made over 1000 lbs of butter a day during certain periods of the year.[60] It is believed the Orwell Cheese Factory's operation continued after 1870. In 1870, the *Burlington Free Press* reported that the Orwell Cheese factory had made 150,000 lbs in that season.[61]

Another commodity that became a regular on the railroad was fluid milk. An icehouse was built at Larabee's Point that provided ice for the refrigerator cars on the line. At Hough's Crossing in Orwell a milk plant was built that was a regular stop for the train to pick up fluid milk which was shipped with the other milk on the Rutland line to Boston. There was also a plant at Leicester Junction that shipped milk.[62] A large amount of milk came from Addison County as it was considered the farm belt of Vermont.

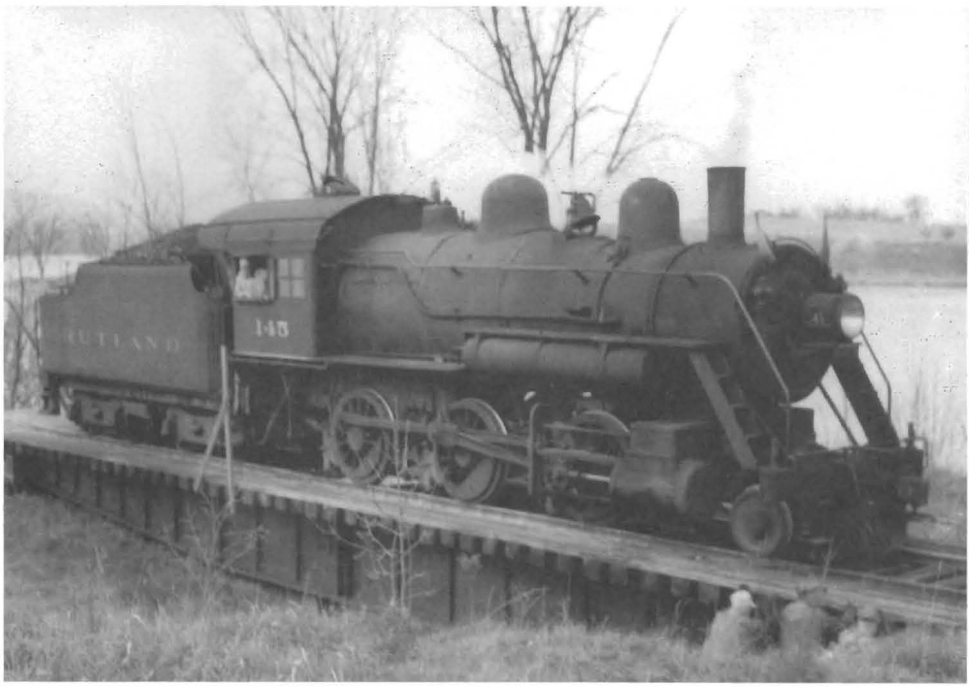
Other shipments on the Addison Railroad consisted of livestock. With the connection to the West complete, and with the Whitehall and Plattsburg under the auspices of the Delaware and Hudson, shipments of cattle regularly began on the Addison rails especially in the glory days and until service to Ticonderoga was discontinued. In 1913, one farmer sent well over 100 head of cattle west to Colorado via the railroad. He sent one carload in January and then sent one hundred head in March of that year.[63] Harold Webster remembered, "A car was loaded every Monday morning to join the cattle train at Leicester." [64]

Merino sheep and wool also became important to the Addison Railroad. In the mid-1800s, Addison County had the highest population of sheep and produced more wool than any other county in the United States.[65] It was common for sheep to be shipped over the lines of the Addison. One instance was in October of 1913. The *Orwell Citizen* reported that, "O. F. Hornbeck shipped a double deck car of sheep from the Orwell Station on Friday of last week." [66] These shipments took place over the life of the Addison as markets could be easily reached via the rails. Other goods that passed over the lines were timber and coal. These were typical freight that could have been found in the cars on any given day.[67]

The Addison Railroad's glory days were short lived, however. By 1900, the Rutland Railroad had the opportunity to obtain a through line on the north end of Lake Champlain with a crossing at Rouses Point. This option had been blocked in prior years but now it was a viable option. In 1900, the Rutland Railroad began constructing a route north out of Burlington up through the Champlain Islands and across to New York at Rouses Point. The new through route was completed within a couple years and gave the Rutland Railroad a different route that provided less hassle than that of the Addison rails.[68] It was at that point that the Great Lakes traffic traveling the Addison rails began to drop. The local traffic continued to be very productive for the next several years but the long distance traffic diminished to nearly nothing. Harold Webster remembered that due to the new island route

and improvements to the Rutland Main Line, the Addison was getting only an occasional car set off to its line. The long lines of freight cars of former years were a thing of the past.[69]

In 1920, the Addison suffered another major blow that furthered its decline. The drawbridge across the lake was aged and was in a state of bad repair. The floating portion had been replaced in 1902 but was still having its share of problems by the time the 1920s arrived. In 1918, there had been an accident that caused two or three cars [there is some debate] to go onto the ice. Later, in 1920, an engine actually broke through the bridge and nearly went into the lake. From that point on engines never again crossed the bridge.[70] Harold Webster remembered that one train would push cars across to the point that an engine on the New York side could pick them up.[71] Gone forever was the connection from Addison County to Ticonderoga, New York, a connection never fully developed to its potential. The bridge would fade with memory and many today would not even know that it had once existed.



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Engines were now manually turned on this turntable at the lake end.

Local traffic would change with time as technology changed. Dynamics began to change as trucks and automobiles were introduced. The Addison had been improved; in fact, new rails had again been laid in 1920. The markets were beginning to change. The hay that was previously needed in Boston was no longer the basic hay that Addison

was growing; alfalfa was the hay of choice to those in the city so the hay market dropped off.[72]

The beginning of the 1930s witnessed some of the major changes for the line. One of the final major hindrances for the line came in 1934 when the U.S. government cancelled the mail contract with the railroad. From 1934 forward all mail would be delivered by truck to the local offices.[73]

As with most railroads, in the 1920s and 30s, the Addison lost passenger service as the automobile became the preferred mode of transportation. Roads continued to improve and people traveled to many places in their automobile quicker and did not depend on rail schedules any longer. In 1929, the Champlain Bridge opened which connected Addison County to New York without a train trestle.[74] The bridge meant a lower usage of the rails because automobiles could travel between New York and other parts of Vermont, and trucks could deliver goods from New York and Vermont. Though the railroad bridge across the lake had been closed by this time, the automobile bridge eliminated any need for it in the future.

Livestock was still being shipped via the rails but that market too diminished. Whiteface ranch did pay for an extremely large delivery in 1938, which consisted of one whole train just for themselves.[75] The railroad livestock business was dwindling.

Two final blows were delivered to the Addison in the early 1950s. Though the railroad had attempted to continue with just local freight, it was still leased by the Rutland Railroad that was in serious financial trouble. In a reorganization scheme in 1950, the Rutland Railroad became the Rutland Railway. Under new leadership, Governor Page was a mere memory and they began to cut back and tried to revive the railway with new diesel engines. The Addison was not making money during this period and regular service was suspended. One train a day was sent out from Rutland called the "Proctor Job." On May 21, 1951 the last train ever to run to the lakefront at Larabee's Point made its final run. Shortly after, the track was removed from Larabee's to Orwell. In 1953, the track was ripped up as far as Whiting.[76] The Addison Railroad was dying a slow, painful death. Its end was quickly approaching.

By 1953, the only two things that kept it open were the grain store and milk plant in Whiting. The milk plant was operated by HP Hood but in 1961 Hood decided to ship all of their milk via truck. That left only the grain store on the rail line that still needed deliveries.[77]

The Rutland Railroad decided it was not profitable to ship grain the short distance to Whiting on the Addison's rails. The Rutland

Railroad devised a plan to transfer the grain store to its main line that would be cheaper than continuing to deliver on the Addison Railroad. In September of 1961, the grain store was loaded on two flat cars heading for Leicester. The Rutland Railroad gave the owner, Mr. Barrows, money for the moving and a lot next to the Leicester station for the relocation of the building. Problems were encountered with a power pole and ledges that needed blasting. The building was finally delivered to Leicester.[78] Once the grain store was moved there were no stops left on the Addison Branch. The delivery stops of the past were gone and within a short time the rest of the line was ripped up, gone to the ages.

ADDISON RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The last train on the Addison Railroad.

"The day is coming when the awe-inspiring 'choo-choo' engine of our boyhood will vanish. The short-haul lines in Vermont are going, and taking with them another phase of Vermont life that had a special appeal...We look back fondly on such a road..."[79] The Addison Branch's time had passed. Perhaps if the Rutland Railroad had developed it to its full potential and not leased to the Vermont Central Railroad, history would have been different. Changing technologies and progress in general finally pushed out the Addison Railroad that had been caught in a power struggle. Like the stagecoach that predated the rails, the Addison's time also had come. The rails through Addison County served an important purpose for nearly one hundred years in Vermont's history but as with all things mechanical, better technologies were invented and its era passed.

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